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# Kennedy Disputes Keating's Figures

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Star-Gazette Bureau

WASHINGTON — President Kennedy and Sen. Kenneth B. Keating are embroiled in another bewildering numbers game on Cuba.

But they are agreed on one point: It doesn't really make much difference who is right.

Keating started the latest round of quarrelling over figures last week when he told the American Society of Newspaper Editors that—contrary to the administration's reports—"There has been no substantial reduction of Soviet military personnel in Cuba" and that about 17,000 Russians remain.

But he quickly added:

"Frankly, however, I don't think the basic problem in Cuba is affected substantially by whether there are 17,000, 14,000 or 20,000 Russian troops in Cuba. Our ability as a nation to work together in dealing with this problem is affected, however, by attempts to color the facts or to

present an inaccurate impression of what is taking place."

At his press conference Wednesday, President Kennedy repeated that some 4,000 Russians left in March, which would bring the total down to 12,000 to 13,000 on the basis of previous administration estimates.

Then the president added:

"It is not, in my opinion, a great question as to whether there is 17,000, 15,000, 13,000. There are still important elements, still on the island, and there is still Soviet equipment on the island. So I don't think Senator Keating and I are debating a serious question unless there is a challenge on one side or the other of good faith, and I'm sure there isn't."

The basis of the numbers argument in the first place seems to be whether as many Russians are coming into Cuba as are leaving.

Keating said "a comparable number" had been brought in to match the withdrawals. But the President said Wednesday that 300 to 400 "at the most" have been brought in since January while 4,000 to 5,000 have left.

Who's right? The President says his information comes from the Central Intelligence Agency. Keating won't say where he gets his.

One thing is clear: There apparently are plenty of sources willing to offer estimates. One respected military affairs writer reported earlier this week that some intelligence officers think there may be even 20,000 to 25,000.

But so far no one has asked the President about that one.

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